

Expansion of Spinal Surgery Program Benefits Patients in Northwestern Ontario

(Thunder Bay, ON – April 5, 2021) The expansion of orthopaedic surgical services means more patients and families will experience the benefits of care close to home across Northwestern Ontario.

“Our population sees more musculoskeletal disease requiring a higher-than-average use of orthopaedic surgical services,” said Dr. Rhonda Crocker Ellacott, President and CEO of Thunder Bay Regional Health Science Centre (TBRHSC) and CEO of the Thunder Bay Regional Health Research Institute. “This collaboration is great news as our Regional Surgical Services program is now able to expand its reach, continuing to deliver the high-quality care to those that need it most.”

The expansion of the spinal surgery program was a collaborative approach that included leadership teams from both hospitals, surgeons, anaesthetists, surgical nurses as well as the Northwest Local Health Integration Network (NW LHIN) and Ontario Health who enabled creative funding models to help clear the surgical backlogs created by the pandemic.

“We are very pleased to be selected as a spinal surgery site as part of the Regional Surgical Services program,” said Ray Racette, President and CEO, Lake of the Woods District Hospital (LWDH). “Offering this service closer to home and in doing so, helping reducing long wait times for spinal surgery, is critically important for the people we serve.”

The availability of this service for patients in Kenora and the surrounding area takes on greater significance when challenges created by COVID-19 such as travel, accommodation and care-giving, especially for children needing surgery, are factored in.

“I am absolutely thrilled with our growing partnership with Lake of the Woods District Hospital,” said Dr. David Puskas, Orthopedic Surgeon at TBRHSC. Working together has enabled patients suffering from spinal pathology to receive surgical care and successfully recover closer to home.”

Since launching in April 2016, TBRHSC’s Regional Surgical Services has worked in partnership with the NW LHIN, as well as Dryden Regional Health Care, Riverside Health Care in Fort Frances, and LWDH in Kenora.

“This expansion ensures our patients, no matter where they live across our region, are getting care as close to home as possible,” said Dr. Travis E. Marion, Orthopaedic Surgeon at TBRHSC. “It’s better for patients, the family who are looking after them, and the recovery process.”

One of the main goals of the Regional Surgical Services program is improved access and a standardized level of care for patients throughout the region.

“A big congratulations to the Lake of the Woods District Hospital and Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre teams for their incredible leadership in this collaborative approach”, said Jessica Logozzo, Executive Vice President, Regional Transformation and Integration at TBRHSC. “It is impressive to see how partners have come together across the region to meet the needs of patients in these challenging times. This innovation and collaborative spirit will serve patients well.”



Both TBRHSC and LWDH have had patients wishing to share their experiences with this program. Below are a few brief stories to share, interviews with each person can be arranged.

Patient experiences:

- Clayton Teeple recently underwent spinal surgery at Lake of the Woods District Hospital (LWDH) in Kenora, the first-of-its kind occurrence in the city. This surgery was made possible thanks to a partnership between LWDH and TBRHSC to expand access to spinal surgery for patients in Northwestern Ontario.
- Samantha Cameron had been living with extreme pain for 8 months due to a disc herniation. An active and avid fan of the outdoors, Samantha's usual summer of fun saw most of her time stuck inside with none of her usual activities like camping, boating sidelined. Dr. Puskas performed her surgery, and the results were obvious right away. An immediate relief of pain and all pressure on her nerves was gone.
"The pain episodes were so severe, I was barely walking, barely able to move. All I could think was I don't want to live like this. At LWDH, the nurses were wonderful, they were absolutely amazing and took good care of me. This summer I will be able to enjoy time with my family." ~Samantha Cameron

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'Our Communities. Our Hospital'

Healthy Together

Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre, a 375-bed academic specialized acute care facility, is a national leader in Patient and Family Centred Care. As the only tertiary care provider in Northwestern Ontario, we provide comprehensive services to a population of over 250,000 residents in a region the size of France.

Effectively addressing the health care needs of patients and families has earned us both Innovation Awards and Leading Practice Designations.

As an academic health sciences centre, we teach the next generation of health care providers and advance medical research. Patients benefit from interprofessional teams of dedicated health care providers and access to leading-edge medical technology and clinical trials.